1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

121 The immediate need is for further field studies, for which there is considerable urgency. We have, in the Ituri Forest, a people who are still living one of the earliest forms of life lived by man: hunting and gathering. The extent to which the Mbuti live this life varies from one group to another, but we cannot expect to find a pure hunting and gathering economy among them much longer. For some thousands of years 179 175 the Pygmy lived this life free from any outside influence. In historic times various village tribes [174] invaded his forest, bringing different cultures and different economies with them. More recently the Pygmies have been in contact with European civilization, which has already driven one major road, and a number of secondary roads, right through the forest. Luckily, no effective attempt was made by the Belgians, until the last two years of their administration, to change the Mbuti way of life, and there is still ample forest to permit a hunting and gathering 179 economy. What emerges from a study of this
182 [P.147 B]

[p.155-C]

stress [pick out?] that which was pygmy."[1] 114

Schebesta's division of the Ituri Pygmies into three linguistic groups is another result of his preoccupation with the problem of the separateness of the Pygmy and villager and the alleged anteriority of the former. He sets out to find an original Pygmy language and claims to have found it among the Efe archers. For this reason he regards them as the "purest" Mbuti. He also, of necessity, believes that their culture is the purest, being least affected by contact with the villagers. Yet from his account it is plain that the Pygmies he describes live in far closer association with neighboring villagers than do other Pygmy groups elsewhere in the Ituri Forest. This whole question of origin and anteriority is so highly speculative, resting, as it must, largely on conjecture, that again we prefer our own more factual basis of classification according to hunting technique, if only as a temporary measure, until we have sufficient information to make a classification according to structural principles. [194].

114 114 197 101 114 197

1. [See footnote, bottom of p.155-D --Analyst]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.162-A]

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

174 Here again we are in a highly speculative field with very little data to work on. The present distribution of the African Pygmies and
[175] Pygmoids tells us little. Early sources, reports of nineteenth-century travelers (Schweinfurth, 1874), tradition, and current distribution all seem to combine to indicate that the northeast Congo has at all times been inhabited by Pygmies who spread out through the entire forest area of equatorial Africa. Both Schebesta and Putnam subscribe to this view, but others, such as Kerken (1944), state that the Pygmies and Pygmoids of the equatorial forest are *not* the ancient inhabitants of that area. This school of thought prefers to regard the Pygmies as a degeneration of the basic Negro race, a view contradicted by contemporary physical anthropologists and geneticists (Jadin, 1936; Gusinde, 1948; Schebesta, 1938).

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

172 Archeological sources tell us nothing concerning the origin or history of the African Pygmies. Putnam reports that neolithic axheads are frequently found throughout the Ituri, often revealed when a tree is split by lightning. The [B21] Mbuti, however, do not appear to recognize their origin or use, and refer to them as "turds of lightning" (Patrick Putnam, 1948, 339). Haene (1949) reports the finding of round stones with holes, which might have been currency, in the Ituri Forest, and appeals for engineers and others concerned in exploitation of the forest to be made aware of the possibility of such finds. Soors (1950a, 59), commenting on this appeal, writes that he met an engineer who, in the course of excavation in the Rega Forest, had found a large flat stone bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions. Asked what had become of it, the engineer replied: "*Nous l'avons cassée en mille morceaux—nous ne tenons pas d'être dérangés dans nos travaux par des amateurs d'antiquités.*"

•174 175 Recorded history is, of course, nil, so any reliable historical reconstruction is ruled out for the moment and must remain so until there is much more physiological, demographic, or archeological evidence. Even the date and direction of migrations among the various village tribes are uncertain, though a considerable amount of research has been done in this direction (Moeller, 1934, 1936). We have 174 merely traditions of origin and history, and even this material is scanty and unenlightening.

[P. 162-B]

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.162-C]

For one thing it is often difficult to tell whether 174 •
a particular legend is of villager or Pygmy origin. Even from the remoter groups of Pygmoids in the central Congo, legends of origin among both villager and Pygmy agree that the Pygmies are the original "people of the forest." Verner (1902) refers to legends from the Wissman Falls area, told by both peoples, that give a purely practical account of how the Pygmies were driven before villager tribes invading their country, and how some retreated farther into the forest and others were captured and brought with their captors. Torday (1925b) gives a Luba legend attributing the origin of the Pygmies to Woto, Father of the Luba, who brought them out from the trees of the forest by singing. Torday (1925b) also mentions an interesting [648]
custom on the accession of a Luba king, the ceremonial for which requires the Pygmies of the kingdom to come to the capital to act as bodyguard for the new king.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

bodyguard for the new king. Such isolated references indicate a long-established association between the two peoples, and that the original nature of the association was a military one. Casati (1891), Burrows (1898), Ward (1910), Schweinfurth (1874), and others, write of the employment of the Pygmies by the villagers as spies, scouts, mercenary soldiers, and guides. Putnam in his earlier notes mentions frequently coming across references among the older Pygmies to this relationship, which of course came to an end when the Belgian authorities stopped intertribal warfare.

Legends from the Epulu area (Turnbull, 1959) show scant interest in the questions of origin and history, but that here also both Pygmy and villager agree that the Pygmy is the original inhabitant of the forest and is, to a certain extent, feared and respected as such by the villager. No legends from this area of the Ituri or from any other so far reported (Schebesta, 1936b, 340; Joset, 1948, 25–56, 137–157) show that the Pygmies or villagers have any concept of the Pygmies' originating elsewhere than in this northeast corner of the Congo, nor do they reveal any doubt in the minds of these people that the Pygmies were the original inhabitants of that forest.

Socio-cultural change has been taking place ever since the first villager invasions, several hundred years ago, but most rapidly in the past half century. The progress of this change can be

[P.162-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.211-C]

alliances change in this way it is a source of friction between the two village groups involved and was at one time a frequent source of intervillage warfare.

Prior to this trade relationship, however, Putnam stresses the importance of the place of the Pygmies as mercenaries, acting as spies and scouts for warring village tribes. From his inquiries during his first period of field work in 1928 he surmised that throughout the Ituri this had at one time been the major basis of the Mbuti-villager relationship. It necessitated the supply of food by the villager to the Pygmy, as the latter had no time to hunt and gather his own food. When the Belgians put an end to tribal warfare, there was no further need for the Mbuti as mercenaries, resulting in the present trade relationship. The difference between net-hunting Pygmies and those of Schebesta's account, in their relationship with the villagers, is that among the archers the relationship is band to village, a result of the Belgian bolstering of chieftainship, even where it did not exist, for administrative convenience. The village "chief" then chooses to work through a Pygmy "chief"

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

niques do not affect the basic structural unity. The fact that the Mbuti fall into different linguistic groups is no more than accidental, and is of recent historic origin. The linguistic division is that propounded by Schebesta (1938, pp. 24–26). In effect he uses the terms Aka, Efe and Sua to refer to those pygmies who were in territories invaded and settled by the Ngbetu/Zande, the Lesé, and the Forest Bira respectively; these pygmies apparently adopted the languages of the newcomers to their respective areas and they have maintained some kind of relationship with their Negro neighbors ever since.

The question of language is by no means settled yet, and it may be that either KiLesé or KiBira may in fact prove to be a language of pygmy origin adopted by the Negro invaders. At the moment there is no significant evidence available to this effect, and given a situation where small isolated hunting bands (of an absolute maximum of thirty nuclear families and a possible minimum of three) are brought sharply into contact with larger, more permanent, technologically more advanced peoples with a tribal system, we can only assume the likelihood that the pygmies adopted the languages of the newcomers, losing most of their own.

In this case the linguistic division suggested by Schebesta most certainly only refers to a post-contact situation and does not necessarily point to any indigenous difference between these three groups of Ituri hunters and gatherers. The fact that, very approximately, the linguistic boundaries also correspond to the boundaries between pygmy hunters who emphasize the spear, the bow and arrow, and the net may be no more than a mark of acculturation with the three distinct Negro groups; on the other hand it may point to some earlier distinction, but in any case is of much more significance in any contemporary study of social structure.

In dismissing the linguistic differences as any indication of internal differentiation it is worth pointing out that any pygmy from any area in the Ituri can recognize though not comprehend any other pygmy speaking a totally different language because, throughout, the intonation is remarkably similar, absolutely distinctive, and different by far from the intonation used by the Negroes whose language is being spoken. This is one small pointer toward an earlier linguistic unity among all Ituri pygmies, as is the fact that they all seem to recognize themselves by the term Mbuti. One hears this term far more frequently than any other when pygmies are distinguishing themselves from villagers, in all parts of the forest. Even in distinguishing them-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasta FO1

ing an ever-present, ever-accessible sanctuary of independence, then we are left with a situation which, if anything, is rather the reverse of what it is normally stated to be; for we find that the villagers have far more need of the Mbuti than the Mbuti have of the villagers.

Here we have to look briefly at the historical genesis of the relationship, which began with the invasion of the first non-Mbuti tribes three or four hundred years ago, and continued until the invasion reached its climax in the nineteenth century. The Mbuti found themselves caught between a number of warring tribes, and according to legend (also according to what one might reasonably expect) each isolated hunting band found it convenient to attach itself to one or another group of villagers. The villagers, on their part, needed the Mbuti as guides, scouts and spies, and, as related today by both sides, employed them as such, feeding them in return. When the situation became more stable, and notably when the last vestiges of open hostility were suppressed by the Belgian administration, this original relationship came to an end, neither side having any absolute need of the other. The Mbuti, however, had developed a strong taste for plantation foods and maintained their demands on the villagers. To this day, if a villager does not accede to such demands his plantation is simply raided and he has no recourse. Recognizing the difficulty of making an effective claim for theft, the villagers continued to supply food at request, but attempted to secure certain services in return.

We have already mentioned the attitude of the villagers toward the forest as a hostile place, and a place that they people with evil spirits. One of the services that they have tried to elicit from the Mbuti, then, is the supply of forest necessities such as saplings and leaves for housebuilding, bark for clothmaking (now almost obsolete among all the villagers), and meat and honey. The longer a village is in existence, the more scarce these supplies become in the immediate vicinity, and the villagers are mostly loath to venture far into the forest. However, plainly, as with the Mbuti, it is a question of convenience rather than necessity, though the Mbuti say that the villagers could never be successful as hunters, being far too clumsy and slow.

This is all largely a matter of historical conjecture, but it helps in providing a sense of direction, and in indicating that the onus for maintaining a reasonable degree of reciprocity is all the time upon the villagers, not upon the Mbuti. For today the villagers are still unwilling to go into the forest, and the Mbuti are still their major source of meat, honey and building materials. But there is, today, an addi-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

this institution implies also the imposition of the principle of the patrilineal, patrilocal unit. Perhaps at one time it was; it now certainly is not.[1]

Finding political relations difficult to maintain and enforce, and although they still continue to attempt to deal with bands as one village would deal with another, through the *capita*, the villagers then look to interpersonal relationships as a means of acquiring their ends. They impose the village kinship system upon the Mbuti, keeping as accurate an account of the growth of an Mbuti family as they do of their own, and they ally the resultant Mbuti "clans" to village clans. It is easy enough to visualize the origins of the system, when hunting bands found they had to side with villages, the villagers mistaking (or perhaps correctly taking) the bands for unilineal-descent groups. In this way the relationship between the two groups would be hereditary and self-perpetuating. But the band today is not a unilineal-descent group, and may be comprised of a score or more lineages. Thus a village that is a kinship unit, recognizing the senior male-lineage representative as its headman, finds itself in relationship with a band under a *capita* who may only be remotely related to other male members of the band, by affinal or consanguineal ties. The band itself, consisting of different clans, evidently owes its allegiance, under the village system, to different villages.

On the one hand, the village claims to "own" the band, recognizing the *capita* as its representative. On the other hand, as a lineal unit the village claims a hereditary relationship with another lineal unit, and de facto dissociates itself, perhaps with the major portion of the band, and involves itself in politico-economic difficulties with the neighboring villages who may claim the other portions of that band.

The villagers claim to be saviors of the Mbuti, to have freed them from the necessity of living in the forest like animals, and they justify their claim to ownership in this way. If the Mbuti band were indeed a stable, localized patrilineal unit, then some effective basis for a relationship between the two groups along these lines might persist; but given the cognatic and fluid nature of the contemporary band, the notion of hereditary ownership seldom tallies with effective economic relationships. Consequently there are continuous disputes be-

[1] This is not to say that one could not find a band that, at one time of the year or another, is not in effect a patrilineage. It is, rather, to say that lineality would in such a case not be the essence of band structure, but incidental.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

621 121 discover, at least for the net-hunters of Epulu, what is the structure of this process.

621 613 [611] We have seen that the band is plainly a nonlineal entity; it cannot even truly be called bilateral, as descent is not counted on either side for practical purposes.[6] Lineages are known, and these are always patrilineages, but they seem to have little economic, political or even religious significance. The only time the lineage is mentioned with any frequency is when discussing the merits or otherwise of a proposed marriage, and then it is not the lineage name that is usually mentioned, but rather the names and relationships of the individuals concerned, their parents and grandparents. It can be seen from the plans, in any case, that the process of fission and fusion under discussion is not one that supports the integrity of unilineal descent groups, but rather one that cuts across such groups.

621 613 184 [224] Nor can the nonlineal nature of the band or the flux of band composition be attributed solely to the ecology. The situation is comparable between the archers and the net-hunters, and yet each of these groups practices a different hunting technique, and the process of fission and fusion takes an opposite direction. Either the archers or [174] the net-hunters could, in fact, operate perfectly efficiently without all the internal movement that we have seen, and they may very well once have operated as patrilineal bands. While in no way supporting those who suggest that band composition is due to local ecology, it is undeniable that there is an interest in lineage, evident in the attempt to balance lineages and prevent lineage dominance. Further, the camp plans indicate a general tendency toward lineage solidarity, particularly in times of crisis. For instance, with reference to Plans 9 and 10, the normally unsystematic camp plan that pertained (9) was abruptly altered and became divided along strict lineage lines when one of the sub-band members, Cephu himself, committed the unforgivable crime of placing his net in front of others during the hunt. The only significant relationship of the flux to forest life is [182] that it enables the band to respond to changes in environmental 621 conditions by altering its size. It must also be admitted that it is

[6] Some misunderstanding may arise owing to different usages of descent-system terminology. Some schools of thought consider "bilateral" as synonymous with "cognatic," and hold that the terms include all affines and do not imply any differences in the method of tracing descent. To such an extent, perhaps the Mbuti band may be termed bilateral or cognatic, but to me, and I believe to others, both terms imply one kind of descent *system* or another, placing an emphasis on lineage that is not characteristic of the Mbuti band and therefore to be eschewed.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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765 524 778 It is noteworthy, however, that the trumpet is not considered as sacred in itself, hidden though it may be. There was one instance when a trumpet was stolen by a member of a different family and a different band, simply because it had such a good "voice" and could sing so well. Whatever power it possesses it is believed to possess through the quality of its "voice." The fact that it can be stolen or lost (they sometimes get washed away in the floods that follow a particularly torrential downpour), without causing any ritual crisis, is in keeping with the lack of concern for inheritance of the trumpet. It is said by youths that anyone who wants to make one can have it, but that if they do not want to be bothered they need not, for "the *molimo* is a lot of work." Elders, however, say clearly that there used [613] to be one for each family, and by family they plainly defined a minimal lineage, all male members descended from a single living grandfather or from the same father, living or dead.

765 534 [611] [174] The fact that they also say that the *molimo* used to be the concern of the band only, perhaps indicates an earlier but now less pronounced emphasis on the principle of patrilineal descent; be that as it may, a noted feature of *molimo* festivals today is their utterly nonlineal nature (Tables 9 and 10).[1] With reference to the greater *molimo* held for Balekimito, there were at one time three *molimo* trumpets in action, only one of which belonged to a member of Balekimito's lineage, the second belonging to her son, the third to Kokoyo, whose wife's stepmother's brother was married to a woman of the same clan as Balekimito—a rather distant claim to lineage—but Kokoyo and Ekianga brought out their *molimo* trumpets because their *roho* wanted it. [621] Thus, by this means they emphasized the importance not of lineage membership but of membership of the band, and the *molimo*, as of old, was at least a band festival, if not a lineage festival.

765 621 771 718 181 182 A more systematic analysis in the next chapter shows the importance of the *molimo* festival as an integrating factor in Mbuti life, and indeed the importance of their whole religious system, based as it is upon a belief in the benevolence of a forest spirit or power. It can, for the moment, be seen clearly enough that it expresses among other things the latent antagonisms that exist between the sexes, because of the same lack of clear, formal sex delineations that characterize the *molimo* itself. It also unites the band (regardless of kinship considerations) in a common expression of the dependence of the Mbuti upon the forest, not only as an economic entity but also as a spiritual entity, a spiritual power that looks after their needs but which is also able to inflict hardship and punishment. The *molimo* heightens

[1] [see page 331 -- Analyst]

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

182 the forest for many thousands of years. It is their world, and in return for their affection and trust it supplies them with all their needs.
182 They do not have to cut the forest down to build plantations, for
824 they know how to hunt the game of the region and gather the wild
825 fruits that grow in abundance there, though hidden to outsiders. They know how to distinguish the innocent-looking *itaba* vine from the many others it resembles so closely, and they know how to follow it until it leads them to a cache of nutritious, sweet-tasting roots.
[821] They know the tiny sounds that tell where the bees have hidden their honey; they recognize the kind of weather that brings a multitude of different kinds of mushrooms springing to the surface; and they know what kinds of wood and leaves often disguise this food. The exact moment when termites swarm, at which they must be caught to provide an important delicacy, is a mystery to any but the people of the forest. They know the secret language that is denied all outsiders and without which life in the forest is an impossibility.

181 The BaMbuti roam the forest at will, in small isolated bands or hunting groups. They have no fear, because for them there is no danger. For them there is little hardship, so they have no need for
[141] belief in evil spirits. For them it is a good world. The fact that they average less than four and a half feet in height is of no concern to them; their taller neighbors, who jeer at them for being so puny, are as clumsy as elephants—another reason why they must always remain outsiders in a world where your life may depend on your ability to run swiftly and silently. And if the Pygmies are small, they are powerful and tough.

• 174 How long they have lived in the forest we do not know, though it is a considered opinion that they are among the oldest inhabitants of Africa. They may well be the original inhabitants of the great tropical rain forest which stretches nearly from coast to coast. They were certainly well established there at the very beginning of historic times.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

175 Reverend Paul Schebesta, set out from Vienna in the nineteen-twen-
114 ties to study them.

114 Schebesta's first trip was an over-all survey of the forest area, in
144 which he established the fact that this was a stronghold of the pure Pygmy, as opposed to the "Pygmoid" in other parts of the equatorial belt, where there has been intermarriage with Negro tribes. In subsequent trips Schebesta gathered material which showed that these Ituri Pygmies—whose term for themselves, BaMbuti, he adopts—are in fact racially distinct from the Negro peoples, Bantu and Sudanic, who live around them. This fact has been confirmed by later
• 174 genetic studies, up to the present. Though we cannot be sure, it seems reasonable to assume that the BaMbuti were the original inhabitants of the great tropical rain forest stretching from the west coast right across to the open savanna country of the east, on the far side of the chain of lakes that divides the Congo from East Africa.

114 But when I read Schebesta's account of the Pygmies it just did not
533 ring true when compared with my own experiences on my first trip to the Ituri. For instance, in one of his first books he says that the Pygmies are not great musicians, but that they sing only the simplest melodies and beat on drums and dance wild erotic dances. Even much later, after he had come to know the Pygmies better and had spent several years in the region, when he wrote his major work, running to several volumes, he devoted only a few pages to music, attributing little importance to it and dismissing it as simple and undeveloped. This could not have been further from the truth.

114 In several other ways I felt that all was not well with Schebesta's
177 account, particularly with his description of the relationship between Pygmies and Negroes. He gave the impression that the Pygmies were dependent on the Negroes both for food and for metal products and that there was an unbreakable hereditary relationship by which a Pygmy and all his progeny were handed down in a Negro family, from father to son, and bound to it in a form of serfdom, not only

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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hunting but also working on plantations, cutting wood and drawing water. None of this was true of the Pygmies that I knew. But I did agree with Schebesta about the *molimo* (a religious festival). Although he had not seen it himself, from what he heard about it and about similar practices among other groups of Pygmies, he felt sure that it was essentially different from the practices of neighboring Negroes, however similar they might appear to be on the surface. This certainly tallied with my own experience.

The general picture that emerged from his studies was that there were, living in the Ituri Forest, some 35,000 BaMbuti Pygmies, divided into three linguistic groups, speaking dialects of three major Negro languages. The Pygmies seemed to have lost their own language, due to the process of acculturation though traces remained, especially in tonal pattern. Only in the easternmost group did Schebesta feel that the language had survived to any recognizable extent. These were the Efe Pygmies who lived among the BaLese, an eastern Sudanic tribe with a not very savory reputation for cannibalism, witchcraft and sorcery.

But in spite of this linguistic difference, and the fact that the Efe also differed in that they did not hunt with nets but with bow and arrow and spear, Schebesta believed that all the BaMbuti were a single cultural unit. They tended to live in small groups of from three families upward, moving around the forest from camp to camp, though always attached to some Negro village with which they traded meat for plantation products. There was no form of chieftainship, and no mechanism for maintaining law and order, and it was difficult—from Schebesta's account—to see what prevented these isolated groups from falling into complete chaos. The most powerful unifying factor, it appeared, was the domination of the Pygmies by the Negroes. Schebesta cited the *nkumbi* initiation as an example of the way Negroes forced the BaMbuti to accept their authority and that of their tribal lore. Remembering what I had seen, living in an